Tuttle Creek Fisheries Newsletter

Spring 2011

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District Update

Harveyville City Lake has been sold to a private party and is no longer open to public access.

New Sampling Procedures

Those of you who pay close attention to Kansas fisheries data through the Fishing Forecast or Fish Information Nights are going to see a change in these numbers. Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks has recently adopted new sampling protocols for all future fish monitoring programs.

In the past, fish populations have been monitored with a consistent sampling regime. This included: electrofishing for black bass, trap nets for sunfish, and gill nets for the remaining species. Sampling locations were determined by the biologists, and these same spots were used every year if water conditions allowed.

In 2010, new sampling guidelines were adopted. There have been two major changes that will affect all future sampling results. First, all sampling locations are now randomized. Research has shown that randomizing the sampling locations will give a more representative subset of the fish population and will allow for more accurate data comparisons between water bodies.

The second major difference is a change in the size of the gill nets used. Historically, four gill nets were used with mesh sizes of 1-inch, 1.5-inch, 2.5-inch, and 4-inch that were 100 feet long by 8 feet deep. New methods use 80 foot by 6 foot nets with varying mesh sizes in each net; from .75-inch to 2.5-inch every .25 of an inch. Increasing the variety of gill net mesh sizes has also been shown to give a more representative sample of fish populations.

These changes will lead to some adjustments, and overall you will see a reduction in the numbers of fish in our data. There are several reasons for this. Fish biologists tended to set their nets in areas that concentrate fish (like rocky points) to maximize their effort. Now, randomizing locations will lead to sampling areas that will have less appeal to certain fish species (mud flats).

In addition, there will be fewer gill nets used for many lakes. Four gill nets were used to cover all the different mesh sizes that now

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New Sampling Procedures

will be covered by one gill net. Of course, fewer nets mean less fish caught. Furthermore, there will likely be fewer big fish in the data, since a 4-inch mesh size is no longer used.

For the angler who uses the Fishing Forecast to determine where to fish each year, these changes are good news. Comparing fish data from one lake to the next will now likely be more accurate and reliable. However, for the biologist these changes will make it difficult to compare new data to data previously collected, and it will take several years to completely understand the results from the new sampling protocols.

The Fishing Forecast can be viewed at www.kdwp.state.ks.us or paper versions can be found at many KDWP offices.

Tuttle Creek Reservoir Fishing Forecast

A view from Tuttle Creek dam

Tuttle Creek Crappies

Fishing at Tuttle Creek Reservoir is going to be GOOD! I have been looking forward to saying that.

For the last couple of years, there have not been too many good things to say about fishing opportunities at Tuttle Creek. Almost every fish species had below-average sample numbers, and several had record-low numbers. This was mostly due to fish being flushed out of the reservoir during flood events in 2007 and 2008.

For the 2011 fishing season, there will be some greatly improved angling opportunities with rebounding fish populations.

The biggest news is the crappie population. Last fall's netting effort collected a lot of harvestable-sized fish. The 2010 sample had the best numbers of crappie over 8 inches since 1997. The population was dominated by 8- to 9-inch crappie, and this size class was spread throughout the reservoir. There were reports of anglers catching these 9-inch fish one after another through the ice. The recent netting sample also had fair numbers of larger crappie. I expect there to be good harvest this year with all these crappie around. Hopefully, these fish will continue to grow well and offer some great angling opportunities for several years to come.

Saugeye were one of the species with record low-numbers after being flushed out of the reservoir in the high release rates of 2007 and 2008. However, saugeye are stocked every year, so with good conditions their numbers can recover quickly. And that is what they have done. There was good survival and growth from the 2009 stocking. This has led to pretty good numbers of 13- to 16-inch saugeye in the 2010 sample. There will be some good angling opportunities this year because a large percentage of the population is at or above the 15-inch minimum length limit. Unfortunately, the 2010 sample failed to produce a saugeye over 17 inches, but with

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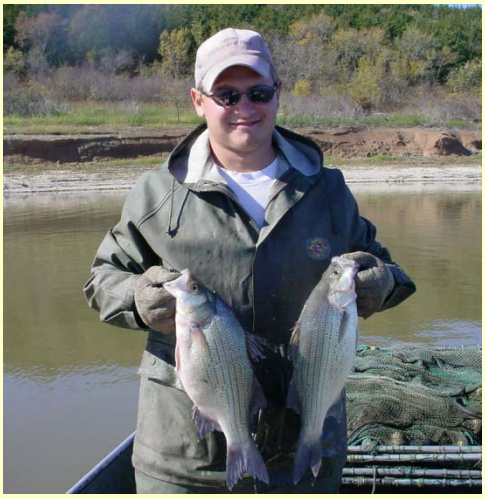


Tuttle Creek White Bass

Tuttle Creek Reservoir Fishing Forecast

good water conditions; we will see these big saugeye at Tuttle again.

White bass also had record-low sample numbers a couple of years ago. Their numbers are improving, but recovery has not been quick. Overall, white bass numbers are still below desirable levels. However, low densities have allowed the remaining white bass to grow well. In the 2010 netting samples, 47 percent of the population was over 15 inches and 6 percent was over 18 inches. During most sampling years, a white bass over 18 inches is not seen in the gill nets and when they have been collected, the highest has been 1 percent of the population. This year we should see some huge white bass harvested at Tuttle Creek. Need one for the wall?

Historically, Tuttle Creek has good channel catfish harvest. 2010 sample numbers are pretty typical for the reservoir and good fishing is anticipated. There is a low-level blue catfish population available with all of the blues in the recent sample being 20 to 30 inches.

Jeffrey Energy Center Lakes

The last two Tuttle Creek Fisheries Newsletters have had articles about Jeffrey Energy Center Auxiliary Lake.

The 2010 spring newsletter predicted good fishing since sampling in 2009 indicated the lake had excellent numbers of big white bass, above average abundance of keeper walleye, an exploding smallmouth bass population, and a nice wiper fishery.

Last summer's newsletter stated that because of a pump failure the lake was 20 feet low, which had limited angler access and made the boat ramp unusable that spring.

The lake was supposed to refill that fall, and I was looking forward to getting on the water to see what had happened to the fish populations. Unfortunately, I was unable to because mechanical problems persisted and the boat ramp was high and dry for all of 2010.

Good news is that the boat ramp is finally useable, and the lake should be completely full soon. Hopefully, the fish populations have done well since 2009, and there is some great fishing at Auxiliary Lake this year. There is a lot of flooded vegetation that will be good fish habitat.

Make Up Lake is another fishing hotspot on the Jeffrey Energy Center property. This lake was sampled in 2010, and there are some mixed results from this data. The wiper population appears to be doing really well with lots of 15-inch fish and nice numbers of wiper over 18 inches. The lake is full of white bass, but most are small. Walleye and crappie numbers are down, and harvest is expected to be low. The black bass and catfish samples were about typical for the lake.

Either Jeffrey Energy Center Lake has some good fishing possibilities this year and should be worth a try.

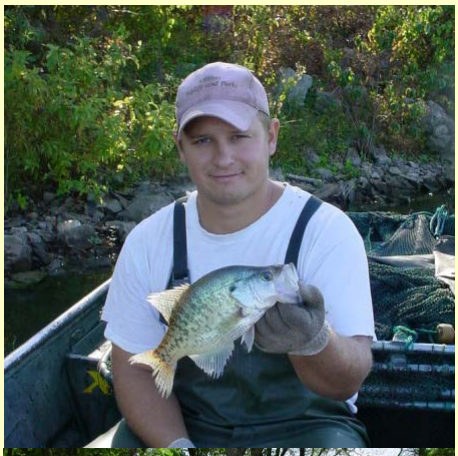
Jeffrey Energy Center Lakes

Low water at Auxiliary Lake

Crappie Waters for the Manhattan District

Crappie are one of the most popular sportfish in Kansas. Crappie populations can be very cyclical, with a lake having really good fishing for a couple of years followed by some tough fishing years. So I am always getting the question "Where are the good crappie lakes this year?"

Below are two tables: one for waters in the Manhattan District that were sampled in 2010 and another with data from 2009 for areas that were not sampled last year. Very small fish were not included in these tables. Along with the number of fish caught per net, there are also the percentages of the fish that were collected in each length category, rounded to the nearest whole number. Lakes are in no particular order. These numbers will be slightly different from the 2011 Fishing Forecast pamphlet because white crappie and black crappie numbers have been put together for easier use.



White and Black Crappie Data from 2010	Fish/net	Percentage in each length group			
		5 - 8"	8 - 10"	10 - 12"	12 - 15"
Tuttle Creek Reservoir	11	35	57	4	3
Pottawatomie SFL #1	5	45	50	5	
Pottawatomie SFL #2	10	54	44	3	
Shawnee SFL	33	79	12	8	2
Jeffrey Make Up Lake	2		83		17
Alma City Lake	17	27	44	27	2
Centralia City Lake	27	72	22	5	1

Crappie Data from 2009 (not sampled in 2010)	Fish/net	Percentage in each length group			
		5 - 8"	8 - 10"	10 - 12"	12 - 15"
Jeffrey Auxiliary Lake	.4		33		67
Pott Co. Cross Creek Lake	12	55	36	9	
Lake Wabaunsee	39	25	62	10	3

Good Luck Fishing!!!

Wildlife Section Update

by Wes Sowards

I would like to inform you of a unique opportunity to improve wildlife habitat on your land. In the past, there has been cost-sharing on a few practices that enhance wildlife habitat on private land. However, we have recently been awarded with a sizeable sum of federal dollars to increase and enhance public-access to private properties throughout the state. This program, the **Voluntary Public Access - Habitat Improvement Program**, will allow us to pay **100% of the costs** of creating wildlife habitat on public-access properties (Walk-In Hunting Areas). Another goal of the program is to lease more and larger tracts of private land for fishing and hunting access. There will be improved monetary benefits with signing up your land in these programs. For more information or technical assistance please contact a KDWP wildlife or fisheries biologist in your district. For the Manhattan area, please call (785) 539-7941.